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CAN THE RACE PROBLEM BE SOLVED?

WHAT are the chief difficulties in our race problem? Are these permanent, or temporary and solvable? If solvable, how? The first permanent and basic fact is the color of the Negro's skin. Out of this foundation fact springs the whole crop of racial distinctions, involving social, political, vocational, and even religious, life. What remedy, if any, can be found? Such are the conditions of our problem.

As to the permanence of the fundamental fact—the Negro's color—reasonable doubt can hardly be entertained. The Ethiopian cannot change his skin; can and will the Caucasian change it for him? A change of color could be effected only by amalgamation of races, and this would require that one of the parents of each new-born child of mixed blood should be white; no pair of mulattoes or of full-blooded Negroes must propagate its own variety. An unmixed white race must at the same time be maintained, which, amalgamating with Negroes, mulattoes, quadroons, and octoroons, might ultimately produce a race undistinguishable from the Caucasian. Only thus, and after generations, with a degree of legal restriction and of universal co-operation unheard of on the part of the races concerned, could race distinction be blotted out. Does any sane man believe such a result possible? Is the dominant white race willing to make such a sacrifice? How many white men stand ready to ally themselves with Negro spouses; how many white women would take colored husbands? Would even the Negroes be willing to forsake entirely their own race—for this is unconditional—to be amalgamated with the whites? Could the civil law determine what percentage and who of the whites should be selected as the victims for this race-crossing process? To state the necessary conditions for this race-effacing problem, is to show its absurdity.

The inevitable conclusion, then, is that the Negro must remain, as now, a distinct and separate race. Never under human

affinities as now existing can this be otherwise. The racial factor is a permanent quantity in the problem. This factor must be admitted, and must enter into the very least common multiple of our national life and unity. It may not be eliminated.

The permanency of the color line admitted, where are the race lines likely to collide; or are they, or can they be made, parallel in the same plane of social, religious, political, and every-day life, so that they may not clash, however far prolonged? Can this parallelism of race interests be assumed under the present status? Can the lines be so adjusted as not to come into ultimate collision? Here is the rub—the real question. Are the aims, the ends, of the respective races identical; and will their attainment by the one race permanently or temporarily exclude the other from a like attainment? If so, it is manifest that the struggle must continue until one of the races shall be forced into hopeless submission. Let us see, then, what are some of these racial aims.

In religion, happily, a monopoly of privilege and enjoyment does not exist. Each race may have for itself the fullest fruition of all the worship, rites, and ceremonies which belong to the church militant, while a common Heaven is conceded for the good of each, without distinction; or, if distinction be claimed, the question may be adjourned to another assize for settlement. Religious collisions are not probable.

How about the political aims of the races? Here monopoly begins to stare us in the face. The mere exercise of balloting need not disturb. It is not the vote, but that which is voted for, that brings on conflict. A million additional ballots in a total of ten or twelve millions would not materially affect our suffrage. But what seek those dark ballots? Did they stand only for measures, it is conceivable, though not probable, that the ends sought might be identical with, or not very different from, those of the great white masses.

But since measures are not to be carried nor laws enforced, save through officials, the ballot necessarily resolves itself into a choice among candidates, and the color line, as among these candidates, becomes an issue. Why? The very political equality of the electors means equality as to office-holding, with its honors

and rewards. That any race nearly equal to another, numerically, will permanently exclude itself, or suffer itself to be excluded, from such places and honors as its ballots may or can win, is not to be presumed for a moment. The right to enjoy such perquisites always looms up in the "bill of rights," and is held as inalienable. But one president can be chosen. Why may he not be black? Ditto of vice-president, governor, congressman, and so on down to the most humble offices in the gift of the people. Every office filled by a white must in so far exclude a Negro. Without an issue as to the office itself and its administration, there is yet a perpetual one as to the color of its incumbent. Much cheap vapoing may be indulged as to a compromise plan, distributing "a fair proportion of offices to each race"; but has any man a particle of confidence in the wisdom, honesty, or practicability of such a plan? Who will make the apportionment of the offices? What parties will be bound by it? Even with these preliminaries settled, how could such a status be maintained? An American political bargain, like a European treaty, is intended to hold only until one of the contracting parties shall feel able to set it aside. The majority, not the percentage, basis counts in politics. Nationalities may be reckoned as political factors, when strong enough to have decisive force. Then the blarneying politician and wishy-washy party platform grow very "sweet" toward "our German fellow citizens" and "our Irish brethren." A generation will swallow up this particular constituency in the voting mass. But the Negro cannot thus disappear. What have parties to promise that will "divide" him? Is there any "colored" side to the tariff, the fisheries, or other platform material, which is specially for him? He votes as a race, and practically goes "solid," when he goes at all. The solidity of one race forces the solidity of the other, and elections resolve themselves into tests of race strength—need we add, of race antagonism as well? It is not in human nature to prevent such antagonism, however deplorable. For the whites to go one way at an election, is an all-sufficient reason to the Negro to go the other. The value of measures to be voted upon sinks into nothing. An election becomes simply an opportunity for division of races. The best of measures and of candidates

will be rejected; the base wire-puller has his day. What but irritation and hostility can be generated? Of course, such elections mean oppression and suppression; and race suspicions and hatred, more deeply implanted than ever, become connate and transmissible by heredity.

A volcano mutters below the surface. To-day the policeman who attempts to arrest a disorderly Negro in the Negro quarter of a southern city is always in danger of provoking a Negro riot. Excited crowds will probably set upon him, even though they themselves may have summoned him to arrest the offender; and they will follow the officer with hoots, very likely with stones; not so much because of any sympathy with law-breakers, but because of race prejudice. On the other hand, the Negro official who should attempt to arrest a white man would be in peril of his life. Mixed juries cannot be brought together, unless "packed" for some such trial as that recent travesty of justice which has blotted Charleston's fair name. Thus the administration of law and the preservation of social order are beset with great and ever-increasing difficulties. Every saloon is a riot germ. A drunken rowdy may drown his reason, but passion and prejudice are not dethroned. Riots generally find their occasion in drink, though their causes may be of long standing, in a race antagonism which very commonly involves many whose only relation to them is founded on the color of the skin. A pistol or a knife in the hands of a drunken madman may set a State ablaze, involving thousands who had no connection with the original parties to the trouble. A Negro ravisher of a white woman seldom comes to trial. This race antagonism must increase, for its cause is permanent and potently active. Time cannot allay its heat, for two forever separate and distinct races of citizens will continue to face each other and to struggle for office and mastery. On the same soil there is no possible relief from this friction and its consequences.

Race friction is found also, to a certain degree at least, in the matter of public accommodation, as in railway cars, boats, and other public conveyances; and, in a less degree, in places of popular assembly. Some relief is found in these cases. By mutual consent, whites and blacks use their own several and dis-

inct churches and schools. Many railway companies provide separate accommodation for the races. The highway and the sidewalk have each its own unwritten law for travelers and pedestrians. At the store and in the market the rule, "first come, first served," has tolerable application. Most of such cases among an order-loving people may take care of themselves; but the disorderly can and do make such contact the occasion of much trouble. Separation here is in the interest of peace; yet this separation renders racial distinction still more emphatic and pronounced. A "dead line" runs through church, school, politics, and business relations, as well as through social life. How can it be otherwise? An ever-present consciousness of an iron race wall is before both whites and blacks. Dub it "southern situation," "southern problem," or what we may, the portentous riddle looms up before us, challenging, yet defying, solution.

What may be the result of this necessary alienation of race? Will the white man's God still be the Negro's? Will the Caucasian's faith, education, social virtues, patriotism, and energy animate the dark race; or will all these be discounted, or wholly rejected from force of race antagonism, while the white man's vices still find a congenial home in the Negro's life? The danger here from this alienation of sympathies is far greater than is generally apprehended. No two wholly-separated races have ever yet long occupied the same territory without collisions. Can they be brought to act together for the general good? Let those who have labored in efforts at popular reform bear witness. In such movements where, as a mass, do the Negroes array themselves? Is it not in opposition to what the white man may propose? With the chords of the Negro's better nature untouched by the best strains of the white race's influence, the daily contact but deepens race antagonism; the races do but drift further and further apart in sympathies and in all that might be mutually helpful. The truce of separation is nearly all that binds a nation together. We dare not construe it too liberally; it is not perfect peace and amity.

The history of race contact affords us small comfort from its analogies. England has been in India for three centuries, dealing with Aryans, Mongols, Dravidians, etc., *not* Africans; yet

the distinction between Briton and Hindoo is to-day as sharply drawn as at the first. Bull despises "Blackie," and Blackie hates Bull, and would gladly throw off his yoke if he dared. Latin and Saxon have oppressed the Indian, who in turn loathes them both. The Mongolian, crowding our Pacific slope, steadily works his way eastward, yet under the scowls of the dominant race. In all these cases, though community of rights, of interests, and of citizenship has not even been thought of, conflicts of race have punctuated the whole history.

What can come when monopoly of certain rights and privileges is the wager contended for? No rifted cloud, even in the dimmest distance, yields a ray of sunshine or of hope for better things. "But," exclaims the baffled optimist, "if both races were duly regardful of each other's rights, the question might be settled." Ah! but that "if" is the gist of the whole matter. Like Banquo's ghost, it will not down. Till human nature is perfectly good, wise, and unselfish, "if" will hold its place, and must be taken into the account.

But, apart from religious, political, and social points of contact, there remain others in professional life and daily occupation which must augment the race friction.

Nominally, the vocations of every-day life are open to all without regard to race or condition. Practically, by the very force of circumstances, the Negro is excluded from nearly all pursuits and professions which bring wealth and social consideration. Let him graduate with honor from a college of high rank, what awaits him? Should he study law, who will be his clients? If medicine, for whom will he prescribe? No bank makes him cashier or teller; no railway line puts him upon its official force. To be a merchant prince, he can never aspire. Real estate is not in his line. He will never own a river packet. Brown-stone fronts are not for him. Even life-insurance and sewing-machine agencies, which may break the fall of whites who fail elsewhere, are beyond him. Why? Because he has no constituency in his own race. His vocation must be exercised among his own people; and these are poor, and his rewards must be meager. A paltry office of uncertain tenure may aid one Negro in ten thousand; but nothing short of a great up-lift-

ing of the whole Negro race in character, wealth, and relative importance can furnish opportunities, or even possibilities, for the most ambitious and the most capable colored men. Such men, serving as porters, hackmen, boot-blacks, etc., will only augment the great army of discontent, which already numbers hundreds of thousands of souls in our land. The poorest white man may aspire to all; the best-endowed Negro can hope for nothing. These are facts, not mere fancies. Can this relative race-uplifting come to the blacks in the presence of the whites? In the eager race for all the attainable, who of the whites will stand aside for the dark-hued brother? Who will give him place or preferment? Has ever another race in all history struggled for promotion under circumstances so difficult, and won? Is the political thought of the land shaping itself in any wise to eliminate this difficulty? Does not its failure to comprehend the weight of the issue at stake—or, more probably, its desire to shirk responsibility—but irritate and make race collisions more certain, and more difficult to avoid? Disregarding the vital importance of the question, and using the race issue, as every other, only in so far as it may promote party success, it tends only to fret the sore, to aggravate the fever. What concern has present party politics with social, economic, religious, or race-antagonizing problems? How far does the medicine prescribed in any party platform reach? What balsam is there in "We believe all men free and equal," or "We pledge our utmost efforts to promote the passage of such legislation as will secure to every citizen, of whatever race or color, the full and complete recognition, possession, and exercise of all civil and political rights"? Of what avail is all this political fanfaronade? Bring this prescription to its last analysis, and does it contain an element of any efficacy to meet the case?

These "planks" are not near the question. They cannot reach race lines. Even in the North, does the colored man receive any fair proportion of the offices? How many senators, representatives, and minor office-holders are of the dark race? And in the South the race feeling is expressed axiomatically in "This is a white man's country." What can party politics do with the economic questions at issue? The white man owns the

land out of which the Negro must grow his bread. What a powerful, even though silent, factor is the relation of employer and employee, whether in politics or elsewhere. It is idle to think of destroying this force of reciprocity. The social status cannot be legislated into change. An inferior race, bearing indelibly its badge of distinction, cannot be leveled up to the ruling class. Spasmodic efforts in that direction may turn, for a time, order into chaos, but when the elements become calm again the white crest will still ride the billows.

What, then, of the crafty politicians and the sentimentalists who insist that "there is no race problem"; that "the whole subject can and will adjust itself if let alone"? There is no subject which the patriot would more gladly let alone; but it will not be let alone. A drunken white fool, or a beastly Negro, may at any moment start blood to flowing, in the present strained relations of the races. Why cry "peace," when there is no peace? What is the remedy? Sadly, yet with perfect conviction, we are driven to the inevitable conclusion that if the Negro's citizenship, and his social and business privileges, are to have play and development, it must be upon another soil than that of the whites. As equals, the races cannot and will not exist together.

But how, and when, and whither shall this great exodus and segregation of races be effected? Is the Negro to be driven out by law or by violence? By no means. He shall not go out in haste or by flight. He must not be sent away empty. Through the old slavery days, the theme on which the Negro's plaintive songs most delighted to dwell was Israel in Egyptian bondage, and the great deliverance. The Negro very confidently appropriated to himself the character of the Jew, tacitly assigning to the white the role of the Egyptian. He seemed to half-apprehend that his own release would one day come by miraculous power. But he must find favor with the whites and be helped to his new Canaan. Where shall that African Canaan be found? Just now, the spirit of migration is strong in the Negro. Many of the most thoughtful of the race are discussing the question, though they, and many whites, unfortunately, seem too much influenced by partisan considerations. What has the

destiny of a people to do with the life or the success of a political party? It is often urged that the Negroes should be colonized in Montana, Colorado, Washington, and other new States and Territories; and that thus these States would be made most surely Republican for the future, and the balance of power would be permanently shifted to that party's hands. How absurd! Suppose the whole Negro population of the South removed to the Northwest—for the older northern States do not call for any of the increment—what lever could the Republican Party then use upon the South? Who then in the South, save perhaps a few office-seekers, would care a farthing whether the Republican Party should live or die? With the Negro the whole party question would also be transferred. Constitutional amendments and federal statutes might be piled up; the South would look on with even less interest than upon the Chinese immigration to the Pacific coast, for Asia's flood gates are still open, while Africa's are closed forever. Such removal of the blacks would surely be the end of the Republican Party. It would be "out of a job"; and the demise of the Democracy would as speedily follow, though both party labels might be preserved to brand other political goods in the future. Political dissolution, and coagulation around other issues, would be the order of the day. But what of the new Negro States? How would they be protected and the autonomy of the dark race secured? Would it be by giving the Negroes the lands in fee simple, or in common, as among the Indians, and by debarring the whites from any possession among them? Does any man suppose that the greedy Saxon could thus be kept out of the new Oklahomas, even by the whole federal army? The fertile lands, the mines, the timber would draw the white man across the border, and the race conflict would go on as before. Moreover, how could Constitution or statutes prohibit citizens of one State from passing at will into another? No such un-American idea could have a year of life. Soon the Negro would be thrust aside and would become a vagrant even in his own land.

But even if every white could be kept out of the, say, three Negro States, ignoring the rights of their present white inhabitants, what force could these isolated States have in national

councils? A political North and South would no longer exist to be balanced against each other. As a factor in national politics, the Negro would disappear, and not even be able to defend himself through party balancing. The Indian's fate must be his—crowded onward to ultimate extermination.

Moreover, the Negro is a child of the sun. The cold Northwest is not his land. His labor was not profitable in the North even under the frugality of the slavery *régime*, when machinery and skill had scarcely entered the field to supplant his simple hand work. A southern land must be his; where shall it be? Any southern State or States, even could the whites be dispossessed, would still present the same political difficulties as the Northwest. The Negro would still be encroached upon and driven to the wall. What of Africa? Even if the herculean task of removal—great, yet not impossible—were accomplished, and the Negro established in his own land in political independence, what would be the result? Certainly our experience with Liberia is not encouraging; yet we ought to bear in mind that the few emigrants hitherto sent to that dark continent were brought into contact with the barbarism of myriads of natives, and a weak christian civilization took into its stomach more heathenism than it could digest. Seven or eight millions of American Negroes would have an overwhelming influence upon central African civilization, could they be relied upon themselves to preserve the germs of the home civilization; but this, in view of the voodooism and other superstitious practices of the Negro, seems to be exceedingly doubtful. Only those knowing the Negro character can estimate the force of this influence.

The question recurs, Where can the Negro find a home, and at the same time be secure in his rights and be under favorable conditions for moral and intellectual progress? This is really the *crux* of the whole issue. We may accept it that race antagonism will ultimately force a separation of races, or the subjection or the extermination of one of them, under present conditions. We can see no reasonable probability of change of environment while the race contact continues. Would it not be vastly better for both races to agree, like Abraham and Lot, to a peaceable separation, each to go its own way in race progress,

the whites aiding the removal by their means and good offices? Of course, such a removal would be the task of many years, perhaps of more than one generation; nevertheless, ought not this peace-bringing policy to be inaugurated? The former slaves, reared in the cabins around "the big house" on the old plantations, fed from the same kitchen with "old Marster's" family, and holding as strenuously and proudly by the family name and honor as the whites themselves, will never remove. They will die and be buried in the old land. But the younger people are held by no such enduring ties. Their relation to the whites is that of tenants to landlords, or that of a town population brought more and more into contact and competition with white labor, which hates them and would gladly drive them from the field. Negro and white will not compete and continue to exist. The colonization must be beyond our borders; but where? Perhaps the most available spot would be in the West Indies, Mexico, or Central America. But these lands are already owned by governments, if not by individuals, from whom they must be purchased, most likely at government expense. Under a United States protectorate, the work of removal and colonization might be begun and prosecuted, such inducements being offered as would draw the Negroes thither. The emigration agents now at work in the South could probably persuade the bulk of the Negro population in a few years to migrate. Fertile lands, homes, independence, and race growth would be powerful agencies in inclining the Negroes to go. The discontented would naturally be the first to migrate. If these should prosper, a general exodus would set in, and in less than a half-century, after transporting a few more people than have crossed the Atlantic to our own shores in the same time and under far greater difficulties, the work of transportation would be ended. Meanwhile the work of educating and evangelizing those left behind could still go on, and the Negro would be able to demonstrate his capacity for citizenship and for taking care of himself in civilized society.

The difficulties of the case are confessedly great; yet with a nation like ours, bent to the task, they need not be accounted insuperable. The disposition among the colored people to migrate is now strong, and is increasing. At no other time since emanci-

pation has it been so strong. Unfortunately, this aimless, wandering, gypsy life is too likely to become a Negro characteristic. What of our future, should the bulk of the race imbibe this worse than nomadic trait—roaming over the land with no regular occupation, no property, and no visible means of support? Probably nine tenths of the Negroes have this undefined feeling of unrest, an inclination to remove somewhither. In nearly all communities there are Negroes of whom none knows the coming, or the going, or even the real names. The Negro is restive, the white apprehensive, and both are growing more and more suspicious. Such a status is already half hostile even before an overt act is committed. With such uncontrollable influences at work, sooner or later a deplorable collision must come. Had we statesmen instead of partisan politicians, would they not look beneath the surface of this treacherous calm, and seek to inaugurate measures which might dispel the clouds, before they break, and perhaps deluge America with such a torrent of blood at the end of the nineteenth century as flooded France at the end of the eighteenth. Let us not, under the fatal delusion of a calm, hide from our eyes the angry elements which mutter just below the surface. Until far down into 1861, people believed that our civil war would be averted, or at least be of short duration; that compromise could somehow patch up a peace between two diametrically opposite principles; and "sixty-days" men went to the front; "to see the brush" and to be in at the triumph. Opposing principles fuse not together; one or the other must win. The permanent status of the race question must be arrived at; the present situation cannot endure.

Does it not behoove us now, if ever, to take diligent heed and to act wisely? President Grant's eagerness to purchase San Domingo as a kind of asylum for the Negroes, and as affording a safety valve for ourselves, was undoubtedly based on true political wisdom, and on the sound statesmanship of humanity. Shall we not renew the effort? Shall we not thus relieve ourselves, and at the same time furnish the Negro a country and the inspiration of hope in his future?

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